The Unitarian Christian

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Purpose: To preserve and strengthen the Christian essence of Unitarianism

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
Onward and Upward forever

"The Place of Jesus in Unitarian Faith"

"Now it doesn't seem to me to make much sense if we quarrel about minute points of theological controversy when we could agree upon the fundamental spirit and purpose of the great teacher of Galilee..... Surely on Christmas Day we ought to try once again to break through all the barriers of theological and ecclesiastical tradition and once again see with fresh eyes the simple figure of the Nazarene, and hear once more that voice which brought courage and an undying hope to mankind.....

I said a moment ago that I thought Jesus would care very little about the titles of honor which men have created for him, or the elaborate systems of theological speculation which center about his name and person. But he would care, I believe, tremendously about the way in which men have tried to carry out in practice the straight, simple teachings of his gospel. What he would want to ask us today is how far we have actually done the things which he told us would make for peace and happiness upon this earth; and I believe that this is the only test of true discipleship which he would accept. What he would be interested to know is whether the spirit that glorified his life and enabled him to live and die that mankind might be touched with the beauty of holiness is still in the world — whether that glory is transfiguring your life and mine — whether we are prepared to live and die that men may be set free from every form of bondage — whether we are spending our lives that the glory of God may cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, bringing peace and goodwill wherever its splendor is revealed. Those are searching questions, but on Christmas Day no one who would dare call himself a Christian can avoid them, for they concern the things which Jesus of Nazareth taught us to put first."

From "Unitarians Believe"
by Frederick May Eliot

THE ORIGINALITY OF JESUS

by

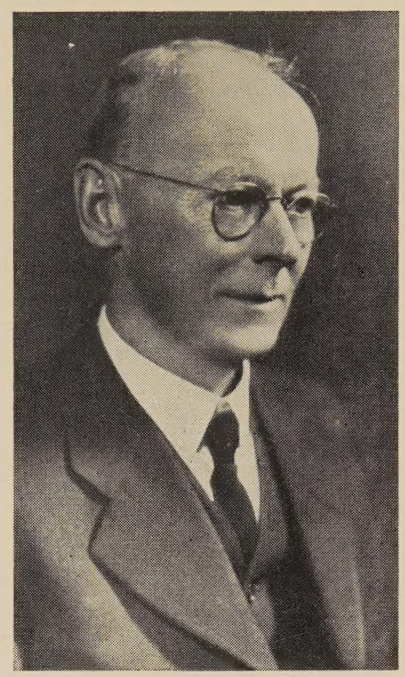
REV. CHARLES E. PARKS, D.D.

Minister Emeritus, First Church
in Boston

Careful study of a good reference ible will lead to the discovery that a urprising number of the sayings of esus are either direct quotations or unistakable echoes of some passage in the ld Testament. This lack of originality no discredit to him; it is not even surrising when we remember that his aim as not in the slightest degree to be oginal, or to think up and offer novel mments on religion. It was very well r the Athenians to spend half their time nothing else but either to tell or to hear me new thing. No such vanity was ever lowed to divert his attention from his ain purpose, which was to bring their wn religion to life in the minds and arts of his hearers; to open their eyes the wealth of spiritual wisdom and beau- with which their own prophets had enched their thought of God.

The wonder is that Jesus knew the ld Testament so well; that a man of his ation could have acquired so exhaustive familiarity with the Old Testament and e Tradition of the Elders that he could eet the Scribes on their own ground and scomfit them at their own game in this rfare of quotations, has always been marvel. "Whence hath this man letters, ver having learned?" they asked. And ere has never been an answer.

Yet in spite of himself, it was initable that one who spent his days in ch eager and intense absorption over ligious matters should make at least o or three entirely original contributions the accumulated thought of his times.



REV. CHARLES E. PARK, D.D.

For example: his insistence that religion is nothing but a personal property, that nations are not competent to be religious, that prayer can exist only in the individual heart, that the truly religious relationship with God consisting of adoration, love, and momentary companionship in the man, answered by approval, pride, and momentary care from God, was a relationship into which no collective entity could enter, — this insistence, though never expressed in so many words but unmistakably implied over and over again, we may fairly say was original with Jesus. Mysticism among the Jews was discouraged by the idea that they were the Chosen Race. While we may detect generous veins of mysticism in Hosea, in Jeremiah, in many of the Psalm-writers, most of all in the author of Job, we cannot say that they were exclusively mystics; they also harbored the old notion that God was God of the Race. It is evident that Jesus very soon discarded the idea that they were

the Chosen Race, and that the individual might do his share of worshipping as member of the Nation whose official priesthood offered up the morning and evening sacrifices on Mt. Zion in the Nation's behalf. The Temple and its worship meant little to Jesus. His worshipping was done in private, on the hillsides a great while before day, in his closet with the door shut.

To his mind, if the Nation was a Chosen Nation it was only because each individual was a chosen man. If the head of hair was lovely in God's sight, it was only because each numbered hair was lovely. There was no such thing as collective religion. True, he reached the conviction that he was the Messiah whom God was to send to his Chosen People, and he declared himself as such. But, significantly, he interpreted his messianic function as an awakener of spiritual concern in each individual heart. A good orchard can be secured only by first making each tree good.

Such teaching was a dangerous novelty. Many people were cherishing a fancied security in the thought that their pure Jewish blood gave them an inalienable birth-right to their share of the Divine attention. John the Baptist was the first to explode that fallacy. "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Jesus followed up and expanded that thought. Your membership in the race does not release you from your individual responsibility to know God at first hand, and live in his ways. This did not endear him to the Jews. It may have been a large factor in causing his death.

Again, he is entirely original in his teaching that there is a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. His criticism of their righteousness was that it was wholly legalistic, perfunctory, grudging, and resentful. He detected in them a spirit which said: This Law has become a downright nuisance. It constantly interferes with our ambitions. Yet we dare not cast it aside lest we release God from his part in our Covenant-obligation. So long as we obey his Law, he will protect us and make of us a great nation. What then is the minimum obedience we must give the Law, and the maximum freedom we may enjoy in following the devices and desires of our own hearts, without disgusting God and endangering his obligation to protect us and make us a great nation? In other words, how much of our cake can we eat and have it too?

As an improvement on this travesty of righteousness Jesus taught the righteousness that springs unbidden, spontaneous, and eager from the heart that is filled with love for God. Such righteousness is not calculated but over-flowing. It never hesitates, but gives before it is asked, and twice as much as it is asked. Its incentive is not fear but love; therefore it is never a mere perfunctory gesture of the hands but a generous impulse of the heart. It is the automatic, unlimited, instant reaction of the whole nature to the love it feels for God. It never says: I must: but always: I want to.

Most of all, he is original in his teaching that man has been created for a great purpose, and has been placed here on earth to assume a stupendous function. This function has been waiting for him throughout these countless generations of the past, during which he has been prepared in wisdom, integrity, and self-conscious power. So far as is known, Jesus is the first one to make any such suggestion. From the dawn of history down to the time of Jesus, man has been a puzzle to himself, unable explain his own creation, or to find any place for himself in the economy of Nature, or to discover what share of the toil and responsibility of running the world he might be supposed to assume. Man has been forced to the

nclusion that God made this world and quite competent to manage it without an's help; and that man is a superflu- s creature, as useless as a fifth wheel in coach. Accordingly, he has devised for mself a code of morals the entire pur- rt of which is inoffensive behaviour and lf-effacement. This is corroborated by icah who declares that all God requires man is to do justly, and love mercy, d walk humbly with his God. Also by e Shorter Catechism, which states that e chief end of man is to glorify God and joy him forever. Also by John Milton, o tells us bluntly that

"God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best, His state
Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest.
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Also by Dr. Samuel Johnson who re- rks that probably man is never so in- cently employed as when he is trying make money.

After countless centuries of this intless life, during which man could nk of no more worth-while righteous- ss than to "tarry thou the Lord's leis- e," stand and wait, never get in the way, rify God and enjoy him forever, and p himself innocently employed, Jesus Nazareth had the temerity to suggest original idea: Man is the son of God, d God has a purpose, something he is termined to accomplish; therefore it man's privilege and duty to be about Father's business.

We cannot be grateful enough for e suggestion. Although it has taken us teen centuries to understand Jesus, we ve at last reached the point of self-devel- opment and self discovery when our minds pounce upon the suggestion: of course, man's function is to dethrone Nature and take her place in the management of our earthly life, and make this earth something better than the "partially habitable world" which is all it will ever be under Nature's rule. For there are but three points in Nature's policy: to maintain the equilibrium of all forces; to recognize might as right, and let the weak suffer whether innocent or guilty; and never to think of improvement. Such an unmoral, unprogressive world can no longer satisfy man. He has discovered his power. He is no longer a mere futile hoper and dreamer, he is a careful thinker and a deliberate planner. A brighter world lies just ahead of us waiting to be realized. If Nature will not build it, man, the son of God, the incarnation of God, the instrument of God, God's executive arm, can build it and will.

In these three original contributions Jesus makes himself a leader for us, as significant and modern as the day's sunrise.

KING'S CHAPEL NOONDAY SERVICES IN BOSTON

December 11-14:
RICHMOND P. MILLER,
Society of Friends, Philadelphia.

December 18-21:
Tuesday,
REV. RICHARD ARCHER,
First Church of Christ, Groton.
Wednesday,
REV. ROBERT PALMER,
First Unitarian Society, Gardner.
Thursday,
REV. HVEZDON V. FAFKA,
First Congregational Unitarian Church, Inc., Harvard.
Friday,
REV. GEORGE R. PLAGENZ,
Assistant Minister, King's Chapel.

December 25-28:
Tuesday, Christmas Service, 11 A.M.,
DR. PERKINS.
Wednesday, Thursday and Friday,
REV. CARL HEATH KOPF,
First Congregational Church of Washington, D. C.

CHRISTMAS GIVING AND CHRISTMAS LIVING

By Rev. Dana McLean Greeley
Minister of Arlington Street Church, Boston, Massachusetts

The custom of giving presents on a certain day in the year is much older than Christmas, and has been prevalent in many ages and among many nations and races. "It is a fine thing or a foolish thing, as the case may be," says Henry Van Dyke; "an encouragement to friendliness, or a tribute to fashion; an expression of good nature, or a bid for favor; a cheerful old custom, or a futile old farce, according to the spirit which animates it and the form which it takes." When united with the celebration of Christmas this custom assumes double significance, and is animated by the remembrance of the most beautiful story ever told, and of the most perfect life ever lived. Christmas giving means giving in the spirit of reverence, as the Kings from the East knelt before the Babe of Bethlehem, and presented unto him gifts, gold, frank-incense, and myrrh. And it means giving for the happiness and the welfare of others, and giving the self with the gift, as Jesus gave his very life for his brethren's and companions' sake.

Our own Christmas preserves and promotes much of the pagan emphasis. It is very highly commercialized. It so overdoes the idea of Santa Claus as to spoil it altogether for little children, if not for sophisticated adults. Much of the money that is spent, much of the beverage consumed, much of the celebrating that is done, is spent and consumed and done not in the spirit of Christmas, but in contradistinction to that spirit. We have not had a Santa son parade in Boston since before the war, but Macy's put one on in New York last year, to advertise for Christmas, and to give the kiddies fun, and both these ends it accomplished, but its grotesque figures and its flamboyant flavor gave it not the remotest resemblance to the real meaning of Christmas. Many of the cards that we exchange with one-another, the greetings that we send, while just as wholesome as that parade, are completely pagan, and bear no indication of the Christian origin or aim of this greatest festival in the year.

And yet in spite of our paganism, the voice of music is in the air, and the singing of carols echoes the message of the angelic chorus of old. Our children do re-enact the stories of the Wise Men and the shepherds, and the manger scene constitutes the central features in all our recollection. Of course Christmas is a mixture of traditions, and has a variety of aspects, like every other social observance and human institution. But the more we can make it an "encouragement to friendliness" instead of "a tribute to fashion", the more Christmas-like it really will be. And the more it embodies "an expression of good-nature" rather than "a bid for favor", the more it will reflect the life of him whose birth it honors.

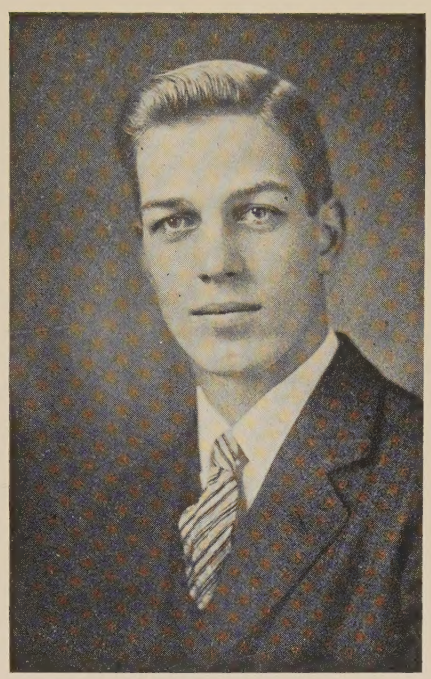
Sometimes it is hard to tell why people give presents to others. They give because they always have given in the past, or because they know that they are expected to give. They give because they hope to get something in return, or because it exalts them or satisfies them to have the friendship or to secure the goodwill of those to whom they give. Perhaps they give as an investment in much the same way in which they put their money into stocks and bonds, or perhaps without any thought of later income, but reluctantly, yielding to the force of convention, they give only as they pay their government taxes; they cannot do otherwise. But as they do so, they give indifferently, or if with emotion, the emotion is negative, and better left unexpressed. This is not Christmas giving, even though it may take

place on the twenty-fifth of December.

Christmas giving is giving the way a parent gives to his child, or the way a prophet gives to his God. It is giving the way a patriot gives to his country, and the way a social worker gives to the beloved underprivileged of his community. There is no selfish motive behind this kind of giving, but it is prompted genuinely by the spirit of love, a spirit that in some measure so captivates us all that we realize for a brief moment what Jesus meant when he said, "When thou givest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." He might well have said, When thou givest in remembrance of me, or in celebration of my birthday, give not to be seen of men, but give secretly, for the quiet joy of giving, and for the happiness of those who receive.

It is a welcome Christmas custom that marks so many of the gifts around the hearth or under the tree as coming from Santa Claus, thus leaving the donor anonymous, for sharing the spirit of Christmas is better than getting credit for one's generosity, and it is not upon ourselves that attention should be focused at Christmas time, but upon the love that binds us all together.

Some people say there is no such thing as real unselfishness. They would insist that what we call unselfishness is only enlightened or veiled selfishness. They would have no use for Christmas as the common people understand it. Old Scrooge was originally among their number. That is why in answer to Merry Christmas he could retort only "bah" and "humbug", and add that he could think of nothing more ridiculous than Christmas, unless perhaps it was falling in love. When Dickens had Scrooge combine Christmas and falling in love, he effected the perfect analogy, only to Scrooge's own further detriment, for Christmas and falling in love both involve the giving of the self, where-



REV. DANA McLEAN GREELEY

as Scrooge was the very personification of selfishness. But he was converted at last, and was made a new man, and with utterly selfless joy, he sent the biggest turkey he could buy to Bob Cratchet's family, and raised Bob Cratchet's salary when he came in late the next morning.

The spirit of Christmas is present when we send out cards to confirm an old friendship, and to express love that in the rush of business has remained unexpressed. The spirit of Christmas is present when with honest sentiment we write a check for the needy of our own city, or for the hungry and the friendless of Europe or Asia. The spirit of Christmas is present when to one of our own family or intimate circle we give thoughtfully something that that person can use, or that will lift his morale or warm his heart. The spirit of Christmas is the spirit of reverence for personality, and it is the spirit of love, poured out in complete confidence in God. You and I revere the Christ-child as the Magi revered him, and

we revere him as the epitome of the powers that are latent within us all, and we revere every child and every life as similarly sacred. And we would manifest the spirit of love, as the man-Jesus manifested that spirit, trusting that all else is secondary or incidental to this. Do we believe in the sacredness of personality, and that every child of man is a child of God? Do we believe that love is the strongest thing in the world, stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death? Do we believe that a brief life, reported to have begun at Bethlehem and to have ended at Calvary nineteen centuries ago, far from being mythological on the one hand, or self-deceived on the other, constituted undying testimony to the validity of truth, and to the invincibility of the human soul? If our answer is yes, then let us celebrate Christmas in harmony with these beliefs, and rejoicingly let us give gifts expressive of our faith and our love. And let us give ourselves with our gifts, as though we were not afraid to give too much. When Sir Launfal started on his quest for the Holy Grail, he saw a leper, who "seemed the one blot on the summer morn," and "he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn." It was not until he returned from his long journey and sympathetically shared a cup of water and a crust of bread that his vision came, while from a mystic voice he heard: "the gift without the giver is bare; who gives himself with his alms feeds three, himself, his hungering neighbor, and me." The first gift as a detached and impersonal coin had been entirely ineffectual in every way. The later gift was all that he had, and it was not detached, but his heart and his life went with it. And it received the blessing of God.

As Christmas giving is the giving of the self with the gift, so Christmas living is the unselfish service of one's fellow-men. It is the life of goodwill and of sacrifice. It is love and it is faith. There are people who live an indifferent, or detached life, apart from the crowd and unrelated to the great causes of God and of man. And there are people who even though with the crowd live a self-seeking life; their existence is parasitic. Christmas for them is an enigma, or a mockery, or a reversal of their year-round habit. It is those who live, as they give, in the spirit of Christmas, and in the spirit of the Master, all the time for whom Christmas is the most natural and the most beautiful festival.

But for those of us for whom Christmas means a little effort, or who because of the music in the air, and the gladness of our fellowmen, achieve a new point of view, and for one season do GIVE unselfishly, or selflessly, can we not also LIVE selflessly? And if we can give and live in the spirit of love for one season, can we not keep Christmas, and give and live that way all the time? We have to pass by the twenty-fifth of December, or let it go, as we have to pass by the Springtime of the year, or as we have to pass by the Grand Canyon of the Colorado; we cannot keep it with us. But we can keep Christmas in the sense that we can keep the spirit of Christ, and give ourselves to others, and live the life of reverence and service and faith and joyfulness of heart.

"In Unitarian worship the ideals and universality of Jesus are paramount for a full religious life. This church asserts that spiritual growth depends not upon one's specialized doctrinal interpretation of Jesus' nature but upon following his teachings in spirit and in deed. To utilize the wisdom of other religious and secular heritages, in addition to that of our own, will assist in this process. The founder of Christianity is regarded not as a supernatural being but as a pre-eminently noble and inspired religious leader."

—John Nicholls Booth

"IT IS THYSELF" CHRISTMAS

An excerpt from "I Leave You My Heart"
by
Rev. Alexander Winston, Minister of the First Parish Church, Portland, Maine

The torches of the Roman patrol ickered in the gloom a few moments hile the soldiers chaffed each other and iscussed the weather. Their voices were a w babel, punctuated by an occasional ugh that crackled in the brittle silence f the street. Then the torches moved ay, rounded the corner and faded into e distance. Marius breathed easily again. e groped through a pitch-black entry, nd felt his way carefully down the stone eps toward a dimly flickering light. Once t the bottom he touched his own lamp to e flame that burned there and proceeded ore rapidly. These were the catacombs. n the walls were rude pictures of braham and Isaac and Noah's Ark afloat pon a rocky sea. At one point Marius aused, for there upon the wall was daubd a picture of Mary the mother, crowned s a queen, seated upon a throne, holding her lap the infant King who seemed no hild but only a diminutive man in full ossession of his faculties and aware of is divine mission. If Marius had been a odern Christian he might have meditaed with some misgivings at what men had one to the nativity of our Lord. In ninety ears the babe in the manger had become king upon a throne, Mary the simple untry-woman had become the queen of aven, and Joseph had disappeared cometely. Marius went on his way to the cavrnous chamber where the Christians held eir secret meetings. There he found the ommon meal spread for all to eat. The oemaker had contributed his bit; so had e widow, the slave, the weaver and the aughter of the senator. Marius received and gave the kiss of forgiveness with the others, ate the bread broken and blessed in remembrance of Jesus, put some coins into the collection box for the needy. To Marius, Jesus was alive in that room as his followers did the things he had commanded: to love, to forgive, to share, to heal. In these acts he became again the Christ not of the throne, but of the manger and the cross.

Since the time of the catacombs, the Christ of the throne has too often prevailed, and Jesus becomes a figure distant, unearthly. The real Jesus is a lost temple around which has grown up a thicket hiding him from our view. We are travellers forever seeking to go back through the thicket to the temple itself, or, to repeat the experience of Marius, to go from the Jesus of the throne-room to the Jesus of the manger and cross.

If we want to be coolly accurate about it, we would doubt if the star shone over Bethlehem, or if the birth of the child Jesus was any more dramatic than that of many another babe born to humble parents in low-hilled Palestine. Probably he grew as any child would, knowing childish cares and childish joys, learning to love the familiar scenes of his native district: the sower, the reaper, the fisherman pulling his boat up on the shore, the vineyards heavy-laden at harvest. He came in manhood to the banks of the Jordan, to be baptized by John. Thereafter he went preaching about the land. He called the fisherman from his dripping nets, the taxgatherer from his toll-bridge; they followed him. He healed some, but not others; was welcomed in most towns, but not always. At last, after a comparatively brief ministry he went up to Jerusalem during the religious festivals, at the time when his presence would be most likely to arouse hard feelings, for he was a prophet dangerous in the eyes of the priests. There he was killed and buried.

Such is the straightforward story — round, unvarnished — yet to people of every age of life he represents the highest possible. To the child he is the one who said "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for such is the Kingdom of Heaven." To the boy he is the fearless adventurer, the cleanser of the temple, the hardy wayfarer who could take the sky for a coverlet and a stone for his pillow. To the youth he is the moral hero in scorn of consequences, sharply dividing the word of truth, the iconoclast, the lonely protagonist of the best we know. To the man he is the exponent of a steady durable faith, the discoverer of balanced truth, the most comprehensive mind that has ever opened itself to the will of God. To the aged he is the one whom death could not contain nor could any doubts assail the firmness of his trust. Such was the man, so completely human that he hungered and thirsted, wearied and slept like the commonest mortal, and yet elevated the plain things of humanity so high that we cannot tell where in him the human ceases and the divine begins.

Jesus would, of course, never be hailed as our Saviour if we had of him nothing but life. He has become also a symbol, a sign for all that Christians hold dear. A poet tells of walking across a heath brown and sere when upon his path he saw an eagle feather. He stooped and picked it up: a handsbreadth of brightness in all that dreary waste. Looking at it he saw, in his mind's eye, the kingly bird on iron pinions, saw him slowly curve in a lessening arc, perceived the fixed gaze of the far-seeing eyes. The feather, the handsbreadth of brightness, filled his mind with visions of nobility. Was it not so, in the poetry of Homer? Was it for a historical record that the blind poet spins his epic tale, that Agamemnon led his men in hollow ships across the wine-dark seas to Ilion? Was it for Helen alone that Homer tuned his lyre? Oh, no! It was that these ancient heroes might be a song on the lips of men, be symbols of bravery, cunning, fleetness of foot, adventuresomeness. Was it not so with Paul? He never met Jesus, not spoke much of the events of Jesus' earthly existence. He heard the voice of his Lord, and this was a handsbreadth of brightness in the wasteland of his soul. Thereafter he was filled with such visions of nobility that he became the greatest single influence in Christian history.

Having said this we must again return to the life from which the visions spring. The Jesus of the manger and the cross remains the heart, the center, the core of every Christian practice. Men may give themselves to materialism or carnage or frenzied revelry, and after the hangover has abated, the Jesus of the manger and the cross is still waiting to save them from destruction. He is the pole-star by which all our compasses can be set. He is the supreme blend of life and teaching. Plato was teaching without life; we admire his intellect but feel no reverence for his person. Francis of Assisi was life without teaching, hence we love him without finding in him a sufficient way, a sufficient truth. In Jesus both unite; the Word of God was made visible, made flesh, so that even our dim eyes could see. Jesus had almost no transaction with getting or spending. His commodity was love, his business was mankind. He didn't own a house, a boat, a beast, a bed. He lived in another man's house, crossed the sea in another man's boat, slept in another man's bed, rode on a borrowed colt, was buried in a grave not his own. Yet so vivid was his insight, so searching his judgment, so powerful his faith, that men plainly saw in his life the life of God. "He who hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Once, says an old story, the gods had need of laughter, so they took the soul of a

ing, and, pointing to earth, they sent it into the body of a slave. The king toiled out his lifetime under the lash, building the great pyramid, blackened by the sun, wasted by toil from which no earthly release was possible. At last the slave's body died, and the soul of the king went up and walked again through the fields of heaven and stood before the gods. Now they had thought that they would laugh, but before the unrelenting gaze of that single human being the laughter died in their throats and one by one they slunk away. So, after these centuries, the old gods have gone for you and me; gone rock-sprung Mithra and Dionysius with his ruddy-lipped priests, gone mooned Astoreth and Tammuz with his wounds and Marduk, slayer of monsters — all gone before the firm gaze of men who have outgrown their little jokes. And who remains? Jesus of Nazareth of whose life men could only say: here is the will of God made flesh; who has seen him has seen the Father.

If, then, we have in him the most perfect life and the most perfect symbol of all that we hold dear, how shall we celebrate his birth? Shall it be primarily with mistletoe and fruitcake, with painted cards, tinsel strung on a tree, paper bells, turkey dinners, frenzied shopping tours, football games? These no more represent the majesty of his coming than does the pop of a firecracker on the Fourth of July represent the length and breadth of this nation. Well might Jesus say to us as he did to Paul: "Why persecutest thou me?" What gifts *shall* we bring, and how shall we worship the Word of God made flesh in him? Listen.

A man once knocked at God's door and when the voice within asked who it was, he replied: "It is I." "Return to earth," said the voice, "labor among men for ten years, then come back." The man did so, and again knocked at God's door. Once more, when the Lord asked who was there, he said: "It is I," and once more he was told to go and labor for men a ten-year span. A third time, after this period of service, he knocked, and when the voice asked who was there, he answered humbly: "It is *Thyself*." The door opened and he entered into the glory.

How shall we honor the birth of the Savior? Not with tinsel for gifts, but with the gold and myrrh of the Christian life, and for frankincense the human spirit inspired to Christ-like love and service. What shall we bring? The dedicated person with his power of sacrifice, his joy as gay as a flight of bright birds, his faith as steady as a brimming river bound for the mother-sea. What answer shall we give at the door, for this season brings us more than ever to God's house? Humbly answer: "It is not I. It is *Thyself*. It is *Thyself*."

"The Office of the Minister"

as discussed by
Laymen of the Essex Unitarian Conference of Essex County, Massachusetts

At a recent meeting in Beverly, Massachusetts, of the Essex Unitarian Conference, encompassing Unitarian and Universalist Societies in Essex County, an interesting panel discussion on "The Office of the Minister" was carried on completely by lay men and women. The participants, all active church workers, were Mr. Herbert W. Dana of the First Parish in Beverly, associated with an advertising agency in Boston; Mrs. Albert O. Hudson of the First Church of Salem, a housewife with a son in college; Mr. Horace F. Robinson of the First Religious Society of Newburyport, business man; Mrs. William A. Robinson of the First Church of Salem, a former schoolteacher; Mr. Richard M.

Rogers, First Parish in Beverly, an instructor in Beverly Junior High School; and Mr. Robert T. Doloff of the Park Street Church in Peabody, a salesman.

Mr. Rogers, the first speaker, referred largely to the report on research conducted by mail by Rev. Robert T. Weston of Louisville, Kentucky, on "The Problems of Preaching". In explaining the purpose and the scope of Rev. Mr. Weston's questionnaire, Mr. Rogers indicated that the social emphasis in our churches, i.e., the encouragement of the people to work for better social order without becoming maladjusted to the present order, was one of the highlights of the report.

Mrs. Robinson, the next speaker, considered the preacher as a teacher, and believed that his sermons should stem from personal experience, dynamically presented and interpreted. She believed it to be equally important that the minister reach out to his people, going among them to learn their interests, their problems, their needs. He should be proud that his people come to him for guidance.

Mr. Robinson then took up the discussion at a slightly different angle, that of perspective. We must look at the function of the church as an overall proposition, affecting our whole lives, not just our Sunday living. Just the fact that those who attend such conferences are usually in the sixties indicates that the ministers have slipped somewhere. They are not attracting the young people by their presentation of religion. They need to do old ideas and ideals up in new packages to hold the teen-agers and young couples. This may mean a decided change in the attitude of many ministers.

Mr. Dana lamented the fact that not everyone goes to church regularly, today. He felt that if people would only go they would derive inspiration from the service, no matter what type of sermon the minister preached.

Mrs. Hudson's premise was that the minister should "sell" his church, that he should be a public relations man, emphasizing what the church can offer in physical equipment as well as spiritual and intellectual stimulus.

Mr. Rogers said he believed that any minister had a heavy schedule, and that it was up to himself and all laymen to cooperate in public relations, and in filling the church. Mr. Robinson agreed, but felt that the minister must guide and support the efforts of the laymen. Mrs. Hudson urged that the ministers should meet frequently with their congregations at coffee hours and similar social functions.

In the general discussion which followed it was suggested that the minister should radiate happiness and confidence, never admitting discouragement; that he should not wait for his parishioners to carry their troubles to him, but should train himself to sense their difficulties and consider it his privilege to *offer* assistance. Christ went out to the people just as surely as they came to him. Another speaker expressed the opinion that Unitarianism is a mature religion which probably can never expect to attract throngs of young people, but should be so presented and expressed that thoughtful and mature people can know that there is a church group with whom they can conscientiously worship.

Mr. Doloff, in summarizing, suggested that all speakers sought to emphasize the personal side of the minister's task; the people wish to know the minister as an individual as they know others in the congregation, and because of the fact that he has specialized in the field of human relationships they anticipate getting help and inspiration from such friendship. All of this requires a determination by minister and parishioners to be of mutual assistance to each other and to the religion which it has been their choice to share.

CHRISTMAS TO ME

by Charles DeB. Allen
Member of American Unitarian Youth Group
Sanford (Maine) Unitarian Church

At the age of five Christmas meant imply a joyous two weeks of "no school". could decorate the tree for the first time, thing which I had not been allowed to o in the past. It meant peeking in closets, nd hunting all over creation for brightly rapped packages. It always was a custom t our house to have the tree in the liv- ng room and my parents would close the oors to my sister's and my eyes until ive o'clock the next morning which was e time we always arose to peek at our resents. It was a period of teasing to pen a present or two on Christmas Eve. n general, Christmas to me, when I was child, was a period of fun and play lanned and prepared for me. All that I id was to go through these two weeks king and receiving every ounce of pleas- re thrown my way giving or contribut ng nothing but laughter and merrymak- ng.

Today there are individuals who ink along this line in that they feel that verything should be given to them. They el that they need give nothing, that life s one long merry-go-round of fun, im- gining that the world was created for em alone and all they need do is to reap s fruits.

From my childish expectations of rills, many gifts, and an enormous feast, hristmas became a time to join in sing- ng Carols and of giving presents, but at at time more as a formality.

Then Christmas developed into two eeks of Good Will and I really began to ppreciate Christmas in a little fuller nse.

Christmas comes in the period of the ear when the days are the darkest, the ights the longest, the weather the cold- st, and every flower and bush a stiff en- anglement of branches. It is a time for ontemplation and a time to probe more deeply into the true meaning of life.

Now I have learned to appreciate Christmas in a more religious sense for the blessed life which began almost two thousand years ago and the great things that child did for our world mean more to me.

Why is it that the birth of this child is so important to the well-being of Humanity?

He grew to be the greatest teacher of the human race that the world has ever known. From his teaching we have formed the basic principles of Democracy and a recipe for personal living in order to derive from life the greatest amount of happiness.

First he taught the Fatherhood of God which means to me that underlying, guiding force, guarding and upholding all life even though there are periods, when, due to our short visions, this does not seem so.

Secondly he gave us the principle that all men are brothers regardless of color, customs, or physical characteristics. All have the same fears, all require similar necessities for living and have basically the same need for kindness, friendship, and love.

Next he inspired in us the thought that each individual must conquer himself before he can lead any other.

He upheld that even the minds of children are most important and he emphasized the necessity for teaching early in life the principles of virtue so that their minds would not be diverted.

Repentance was another of his basic teachings. By this I feel that he meant anyone, having the will to do so, could, at any period of life, mend his ways and start anew.

He also taught that the giving of one-

self to others is the ultimate happiness and even, if necessary, the giving of one's life to a cause higher and above oneself.

We must realize that the kingdom of heaven comes from within, that we must create happiness for ourselves and dear ones through our own initiative and individuality, thereby building a fine life for ourselves.

To be happy we must give something of ourselves. The people who feel that Christmas is only a time for merry-making, laughter, receiving gifts, and getting vacations from work and school have not yet reached the true heights of happiness.

Can you, or rather will you, really enjoy Christmas at its best?

Can you, or rather will you, really enjoy life at its best?

Oh I realize that life and Christmas should be a time for merry-making and good cheer. All of this has its place. But the real thought must go deeper.

As I have said, most people just scratch the surface, thinking only of themselves; but if just once they would try to feel more reverent, and think a little more deeply, put some emotion, love, and kindness behind their gifts expecting no gifts in return, they would feel and realize the full extent of Christmas and life, the feeling of love and being nearer to God.

(Editorial Note: Charles DeB. Allen is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Allen of Sanford, Maine. Charles was fifteen years old at the time he wrote and delivered this article at a Christmas Eve Candlelight Service conducted by the young people of the Sanford Unitarian Church.)

A Unitarian housewife has finally given us a child's story of the first Christmas which we can present to our children confident that it will teach them the beauty and the lovely symbolism of the old story to counteract the present day commercialism of the Christmas season.

"The Christmas Story", a book of poetry by Olive Driver, illustrated by the author, is published by the Exposition Press, Inc. and sells for $1.50 a copy. Its light verse and recurring little songs to be sung to the tune of Brahms' "Lullaby" could easily be adapted to church school presentation.

Mrs. Driver, a native of Newton, Massachusetts, is a graduate of Bates College, with a Master's degree from the University of Illinois. She is the wife of Ernest C. Driver, Professor of Zoology at Smith College in Northhampton, Massachusetts where they make their home.

Prayer

Our Father, confirm in us the goodwill and the conviction of brotherhood that are born of this season. Teach us that our life is hid with thee in Christ, and that we are members one of another. And help us to keep the love and the light and the joy of this day through endless days to come.

Amen.

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Freedom brings many problems. This month's issue of the *Christian Register* deals with some of them.

—*how can our groups* work democratically and still be effective?
the freedom and responsibility of groups to adopt democratic means if they are to achieve good ends is discussed in trenchant detail by Eduard Lindeman, noted American social philosopher.

—*how free is the common man* in an age where totalitarianism thrives?
M. Georges Marchal gives the viewpoint of the French liberal in excerpts of his address to the AUA conference in Montreal.

—*how can the individual* adjust to the responsibility of freedom to solve his own life problems without shifting them to God or government? Glenn O. Canfield gives his answer from the CBS "Church of the Air" sermon that brought enthusiastic public response.

—*can the liberal* develop a worship and theology that are satisfying?
A renowned astro-physicist summarizes results of a questionnaire among scientists who are religious liberals. In another article, Jay William Hudson discusses a liberal approach to public prayer.